PROSPECT;

OR

VIEW OF THE MORAL WORLD.

BY ELIHU PALMER.

VOL. I. SATURDAY, *May 19th*, 1804. NO. 24.

Comments upon the Sacred Writings of the Jews and Christians. Exodus Chapter 3d.

THE theiſm andmorality of this chapter may with much propriety be called in queſtion; there is an evident incorrectneſs in both, and wherever this appears it muſt invalidate the ſuppoſed divine origin of any book whatever. Moſes who at this time was acting in the capacity of a ſhepherd to his father-in law Jethro, ſaw a wonderful ſight, a buſh in flames, without being conſumed. And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midſt of a buſh: and he looked, and, behold, the buſh burned with fire, and the buſh was not conſumed. And Moſes ſaid, I will now turn aſide and ſee this great ſight, why the buſh is not burned. And when the Lord ſaw that he turned aſide to ſee, God called unto him out of the midſt of the buſh, and ſaid, Moſes, Moſes! And he ſaid, here am I. And he ſaid draw not nigh hither; put off thy ſhoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou ſtandeſt is holy ground. Here is a ſtrange confuſion of ideas and ſuch as repreſent the Jewiſh divinity in a contemptible point of light. First it is the Angel of the Lord that took his ſeat in this flaming predicament; then it appears to be God himſelf. This caſe is ſimilar to that of old Jacob, who wreſtled all night with an Angel, and afterwards it turned out to be God himſelf. Do theſe inſpired writers acknowledge no difference between Angels and the Supreme Creator of the univerſe? It ſeems not, and of courſe their views muſt be very limited concerning the

ſplendid perfection of the eternal God. But Moſes marches up to this flaming buſh to examine the ſingular phenomenon of its not being conſumed; when it appeared that God himſelf was there, and called out for Moſes. Moſes made his reſponſes and received the mandate of the most high, which conſists in a ſolemn injunction that Moſes ſhould pull off his ſhoes becauſe the ground on which he stood was holy. Very important command, ſublime revelation indeed! that God ſhould take the trouble to ſeat himſelf in a flaming buſh for the ſimple and fooliſh purpoſe of telling a man to pull off his ſhoes. Such degrading repreſentations of the Supreme Being are strong evidences that he was not concerned in any ſhape whatever with theſe who fabricated this book. In the last verſe of this chapter we find God directing his choſen people to rob the Egyptians of their property, under the ſpecious name of borrowing, but without any intention of returning the things again, or any equivelent for them. But every woman ſhall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that ſojourneth in her houſe, jewels of ſilver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye ſhall put them upon your ſons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall ſpoil the Egyptians. How far ſuch proceedings and directions are conſistent with the principle of immutable justice, christian believers ought to explain.

History silent in regard to Remarkable occurrences, related in the Bible.

When Christ was baptiſed by John the Heavens were opened, and a voice was heard, declaring his divine origin. Such a prodigy must have awakened the attention of all Judea; yet we find the historians totally ſilent on the matter. It is strange, that the horrible maſſacre of the children by the command of Herod, ſhould be totally unnoticed by Joſephus, and even by the evangelists, Mark, Luke, and John. Mathew alone mentions it; but his authority is ſufficient to juſtify an interpolation into the text of others, who are defective in that parti-

cular. It is well known with what ſucceſs the primitive christians began the holy work of interpolating, ſuppreſſing, forging, and altering profane histories; but as we believe their piety always prevented their meddling with the ſacred text, notwithstanding the arguments of infidels, who attempt to prove the contrary, theſe holy frauds have been found of infinite ſervice in eſtabliſhing the cauſe of christianity. Why do we forbear to purſue their great and laudable example? About eighteen centuries ago, the ſun was darkened, the moon ceaſed to give light, and the stars fell from Heaven; the ſign of the Son of Man was ſeen, the Lord himſelf decended from Heaven with a ſhout, the trumpets of the arch angels, were heard, the dead in Christ aroſe, St. Paul and other of the elect, who were then living, were caught up in the clouds, went to meet the Lord in the air, and have been with him ever ſince. It is truly astoniſhing, that a phenomonon ſo awful as the destruction of the ſyſtem of nature, ſhould have made no interruption in the state of nations and affairs of that time; that all the historians ſhould omit to record ſo dreadful an event, nay, that they ſhould ſurvive it; and that the primitive fathers ſhould forbear to mention a circumstance which was ſo well calculated to eſtabliſh the christian religion, and confute all the arguments of the Heathens. But Christians can have no doubt, but that it really happened, ſince it was ſo directly foretold both in time and circumstance, by Christ and his apostle Paul.

Profession of faith of a Savoyard Curate, from Rousseau, continued from our last.

Again, if every particle of matter has its particular direction, what can be the cauſe of all thoſe directions and their variations? If every atom or particle of matter revolve only on its axis, none of them would change their place, and there would be no motion communicated; and even in this caſe it is neceſſary that ſuch a revolving motion ſhould be carried on one way. To aſcribe to

matter motion in the abstract, is to make uſe of the terms without a meaning; and in giving it any determinate motion, we must of neceſſity ſuppoſe the cauſe that determines it. The more I multiply particular forces, the more new cauſes have I to explain, without ever finding one common agent that directs them. So far from being able to conceive any regularity or order in the fortuitous concourſe of elements, I cannot even conceive the nature of their concurrence; and an univerſal chaos is more inconceivable than univerſal harmony. I eaſily comprehend that the mechaniſm of the world cannot be perfectly known to the human underſtanding; but, whatever men undertake to explain, they ought at least to ſpeak in ſuch a manner that others may understand them.

If from matter being put in motion I diſcover the exiſtence of a *Will*, as the first active cauſe, this matter, being ſubjected to certain regular laws of motion, diſplay alſo intelligence: This is my ſecond article of faith. To act, to compare, to prefer, are the operations of an active, thinking being; ſuch a being, therefore, exists. Do you proceed to aſk me, where I diſcover its exiſtence? I anſwer, not only in the revolutions of the celeſtial bodies; not only in myſelf; but in the flocks that feed on the plain, in the birds that fly in the air, in the ſtone that falls to the ground, and in the leaf that trembles in the wind.

I am enabled to judge of the phyſical order of things, although ignorant of their final cauſe; becauſe, to be able to form ſuch a judgment, it is ſufficient for me to compare the ſeveral parts of the viſible univerſe with each other, to study their mutual concurrence, their reciprocal relations, and to obſerve the general reſult of the whole. I am ignorant why the univerſe exists, but I am enabled, nevertheleſs, to ſee how it is modified; I cannot fail to perceive that intimate connection, by which the ſeveral beings it is compoſed of, afford each other aſſiſtance. I reſemble, in this reſpect, a man who ſees the inſide of a watch, for the first time, and is captivat-

ed with the beauty of the work, although ignorant of its uſe. I know not, he may ſay, what this machine was good for, but I ſee that each part is made to fit ſome other; I admire the artist for every part of his performance, and am certain that all theſe wheels act thus in concert to ſome common end which it is impoſſible for me to ſee.

But let us compare the partial and particular ends, the means whereby they are effected, and their constant relations of every kind; then let us appeal to our innate ſenſe of conviction; what man in his ſenſes can refuſe to acquieſce in ſuch testimony? To what unprejudiced view does not the viſible arrangement of the univerſe diſplay the ſupreme intelligence of its author? How much ſophistry does it not require, to diſavow the harmony of created beings, and that admirable order in which all the parts of the ſystem concur to the preſervation of each other? You may talk to me as much as you pleaſe, of combinations and chances; what end will it anſwer to reduce me to ſilence, if you cannot perſuade me into the truth of what you advance? and how will you divest me of that involuntary ſentiment, which continually contradicts you? If organiſed bodies are fortuitouſly combined in a thouſand ways, before they aſſume ſettled and constant forms: if at first there are formed stomachs without mouths, feet without heads, hands without arms, and imperfect organs of every kind, which have periſhed for want of the neceſſary faculties of ſelf-preſervation; how comes it that none of theſe imperfect eſſays have engaged our attention? Why hath nature, at length, confined herſelf to laws to which ſhe was not at first ſubjected? I confeſs that I ought not to be ſurpriſed that any poſſible thing ſhould happen, when the rarity of the event is compenſated by the great odds that it did not happen. And yet if any one was to tell me that a number of printer's types, jumbled promiſcuouſly together, had diſpoſed themſelves in the orders of the letters compoſing the ænied, I certainly ſhould not deign to take one step to verify or diſprove ſuch a story. It

may be ſaid, I forget the number of chances; but pray how much must I ſuppoſe to render ſuch a combination in any degree probable? I, who ſee only one, must conclude that there is an infinite number against it, and that it is not the effect of chance. Add to this, that the product of theſe combinations must be always of the ſame nature with the combined elements: hence life and organization never can reſult from a blind concourſe of atoms; nor will the chymist, with all his art in compounds. ever find ſenſation and thought at the bottom of the crucible*.

I have been frequently ſurpriſed, and ſometimes ſcandalized, in the reading of Nieuwentheit. What a preſumption was it to ſit down to make a book of theſe wonders of nature that diſplay the wiſdom of their author? Had his book been as big as the whole world, he would not have exhausted his ſubject; and no ſooner do we enter into the minutiæ of things than the greatest wonder of all eſcapes us; that is, the harmony and connection of the whole. The generation of living and organiſed bodies alone, baffles all the efforts of the human understanding. That inſurmountable barrier, which nature had placed between the various ſpecies of animals, that they might not be confounded with each other, makes her intenti-

---

* It would be incredible, if we had not proof of it, that human extravagance could be carried to ſuch a pitch. *Amatus Lusitanus*, aſſures us, that he had ſeen in a phial an homuncule, about an inch long, which *Julius Camillus*, like another *Prometheus*, had generated by his ſkill in alchymy. *Paracelsus*, in his treatiſe *de natura rerum*, gives the proceſs of making theſe Mannikins, and maintains, that Pygmies, Fauns, Satyrs and Nymphs, were engendered by chymistry. There wants nothing more, in my opinion, to eſtabliſh the poſſibility of theſe facts, than to prove that the organical materials can reſist fire, and that the component moleculæ may preserve themſelves alive in the intenſe heat of a reverberatory furnace.

ons ſufficiently evident. Not contented only to eſtabliſh order, ſhe had taken effectual methods to prevent its being disturbed.

There is not a being in the univerſe which may not, in ſome reſpect, be regarded as the common centre of all others, which are ranged around it in ſuch a manner that they ſerve reciprocally as cauſe and effect to one another. The imagination is loſt, and the underſtanding confounded, in ſuch an infinite diverſity of relations, of which, however, not one of them is either loſt or confounded in the crowd. How abſurd the ſuppoſition, to deduce this wonderful harmony from the blind mechaniſm of a fortuitous jumble of atoms! Thoſe who deny the unity of deſign, ſo manifeſt in the relation of all the parts of this grand ſyſtem, may endeavour, as much as they will, to conceal their abſurdities with abſtract ideas co-ordinations, general principles, and emblematical terms; whatever they may advance, it is impoſſible for me to conceive that a ſyſtem of beings can be ſo duly regulated, without the exiſtence of ſome intelligent cauſe which affects ſuch regulation.

(To be continued.)

RANNIE's EXHIBITION.

THE age of ſuperſtition has not yet paſſed! for, after combatting the enemies of truth ſince the creation, the numerous and reſpectable writers and advocates of this inestimable virtue still find it a difficult task to remove the cobwebs of impoſition from the eyes of *all* mankind. Copernicus was condemned to an ignominious death for daring to oppoſe the monſtrous doctrines of the reigning ſchools that inſiſted on making the earth to be the centre of the univerſe!—and Archimedes, who enlightened the world by his knowledge of mechaniſm, which enabled him to deſtroy the enemy's ſhips laying before the walls of Syracuſe, by the uſe of burning glaſſes, was murdered by an ignorant ſoldier whilſt in the very

act of ſo'ving ſome great and uſeful problem in mathematics.

And now at this later period, in the commencement of the nineteenth century, and in ſo enlightened a city as New-York, ſhall it be credited, that, when a perſon of long experience comes before the public with both the ability and intention of expoſing, and, if poſſible, exterminating the very dregs of fanaticiſm, that he ſhould be avoided and detested by the remnants of the diſciples of illiberality, ſome of whom have the ſelf ſufficiency of an Ostrich that thrust his head into a buſh when cloſely purſued by the hunters, under the ſagacious *idea*, that they cannot ſee him whilst his own eyes are ſhut against them. To ſuch contracted ſpirits as theſe, *one more opportunity* will be given, to clear away the mists that have been cast over their understandings, by the artful deceivers of antiquity. One more opportunity afforded them to avoid the ſelf-condemning diſgrace of *dying under the clouds of superſtition*, which they have it now in their power ſo eaſily to diſpel.

On TUESDAY, the 22d of the preſent month, the Apocryphal story of the Witch of Endor, the Athenian Oracle, &c. &c. will be explained by the powers of Ventriloquiſm. The changing of Metals and Liquids—the Metamorphoſis of Cards—Feats of an Artificial Fiſh, will be exhibited, together with a vast variety of other entertainments as will be expreſſed in the hand bills of the day, *which is to be the last* night of Mr. RANNIE'S Perſormance in the city of New-York. May 19.

An Original Letter of THOMAS PAINE, to a friend, after the publication of the Age of Reaſon, will appear in the next Number.

NEW-YORK:

Printed and published by the Editor, No. 26, Chatham-ſtreet, at Two Dollars per annum, one half paid in advance, every ſix months.